

measure how we are making progress. I am not sure that we do that quite as we should. We need to do better with reading. We have learned that if we do not teach these children how to read early on, it is going to be problematic in terms of their future education. So that is extraordinarily important.

We just had a call for more effective measurement of graduation rates by the Secretary of Education. And I have actually introduced legislation along those lines previous to that. I am a strong believer that we need to be able to measure graduation equally throughout all of our State so we can determine what the graduation measures truly are.

I believe that dealing with No Child Left Behind has not been easy. There is opposition to it. There are those that believe it is too demanding. They are reluctant to try to undertake to meet the standards that are there. Many of us who will speak tonight believe we can make improvement in No Child Left Behind. As I indicated, Secretary Spellings just in the last 2 days has issued a series of regulatory changes which she believes she can make, and she has already made some, in order to improve No Child Left Behind.

I believe that we in Congress should assume that responsibility too. That we should not just say we don't like it, we are not going to change it, because if we don't like it and we are not changing it, it's going to stay the same. We should look at the various things that we can do in order to make No Child Left Behind more meaningful if indeed there are problems as far as that is concerned.

I mentioned a growth model. That is a significant aspect of this. If we measure growth, we don't have to measure that everyone has achieved the way we would like them to, but how much they have grown, which could be a factor. I mentioned the graduation rate, which is important. A clarification of multiple assessments might be important as well.

Obviously, information to parents is also vitally important at all times to make sure that they are involved and engaged in terms of what is happening in our schools. I have seen a program in schools just the last couple of days in Delaware, and I have seen what one person in a school can do in terms of communication between the school, the parents, and the outside. I think it makes all the difference in the world, and that is something that we should be pursuing. Supplemental education services is included in No Child Left Behind, and that is another area in which we can provide services to those kids who need it the most.

These are the kinds of things we need to boost. We don't need to dismiss them or throw them out because we feel that perhaps they don't work as well as they should. They do work. They make a difference as the education of our young children is concerned.

I would call on the media to get involved with this. I think we need to look at the comparisons with other countries, we need to look at the significance of education as it applies to the economics of what kids are going to be doing in the future. There just needs to be a greater understanding among our young people that with good education, their opportunities explode in terms of what they might be able to do.

So these are all things that I think we all have a responsibility for, Republicans and Democrats alike, in Congress. I believe the Secretary of Education is doing all that she can. I believe we are still at risk 25 years later. I don't want to be at risk 25 years from now. Hopefully, together we can continue to work to make sure that American education is improved to the point that we can look at everybody else and say we have without a doubt the best education system in the world.

I thank the gentleman for yielding time. I yield back to him.

Mr. MCKEON. The gentleman didn't mention that he used to be Governor of Delaware and had occasion to visit every school. I have had the opportunity to visit his district a couple of times and it's always a real pleasure. It's interesting to be able to drive across the whole State in less time than it takes me to get from one part of my district to another.

Ms. BIGGERT, a member of the committee from the State of Illinois, I yield time to you.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you. I thank the gentleman from California, Mr. MCKEON, for facilitating this discussion on the 25th anniversary of President Reagan's A Nation at Risk report and the importance of education to our economic future. I appreciate your leadership on the Education and Labor Committee. I can't think of a more appropriate event than the 25th anniversary of the report, A Nation at Risk, to review our education system and our global competitiveness. I think this report outlined the dire consequences if we as a Nation fail to improve our schools. In the 25 years since that warning, a number of things have changed. But we still face many of the same concerns raised by the report.

I remember well when this report came out. In fact, I was president of my local high school board at the time, and I know how devastated we were to find out how badly we were doing. People asked me why I wanted to be on the school board. I wanted to be on the school board because I wanted to make sure that my children got the best education available, and I wanted to work to make sure that that happened. So I was concerned about this.

I thought back on my family, and the thing that was always so important to our family was education. In fact, my father told all of us, there were four of us, that education was the most important thing, and if you got a good education, you could do most anything

that you wanted. I don't think I would be here if it hadn't been for that. But he also was a very great man, and he said, And I will pay for it.

Now when you look back at that time, it wasn't as expensive, and we think of all of our kids and grandchildren in schools now.

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But my older sister went to medical school, I went to law school and became an attorney, my brother went to law school and became a judge, and my little sister got her master's in Latin and Greek. Now, she doesn't use that too much anymore, but I think the point is that is how important education is and how it remains.

I really do worry, because it is at a time now when we have to compete on a global scale. Americans have shown their entrepreneurial skills and leadership, making the U.S. the largest and most robust economy in the world. However, we are seeing that Asia and Europe, our economic competitors, are making significant new investments in their infrastructure and human capital.

In a recent report, "The Gathering Storm," in looking at what is happening, this report shows that our competitors' investments are beginning to pay off and they are challenging the U.S. leadership in sciences, no matter how it is measured: By the number of patents, they are having more and more patents they are gaining; articles written in the scientific journals; Nobel Prizes won; percentage of the gross domestic product dedicated to research and development; and even the number of degrees.

We all know that our graduate schools have been filled with graduate students who have come from foreign countries. In the past they have been staying in our country. Now we are seeing the brain drain with them leaving.

So despite the evidence that science and education is responsible for America's preeminence in so many areas today, the 2000 Hart-Rudman Report on National Security found that "the U.S. Government has seriously underfunded basic scientific research in recent years. The quality of the U.S. education system too has fallen well below the scores of other nations." In fact, in one of the reports, we find that with other countries, we rank number 28, that is 28 under all of these other countries for our educational system.

I believe that now, more than any time in our history, we are at a crossroads. The economic prosperity of this country is the product of our well-trained workforce, and if the United States is going to be able to continue as the economic leader and have the creativity and the innovation that we need in technology, we have to ensure that our current and future workers have the tools necessary to compete.

There is not a quick fix to this problem, but there is no question that by providing the quality education to the